

**BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
GOLF SUBCOMMITTEE**

There was a special meeting of the above-referenced subcommittee held on Tuesday, September 24, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. in Conference Room #2, Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

Present were: Councilors Leon Rivers, Mark Jacobs and Joseph Merritt. Also present were: Jon Colman, Bill Starkie, Mark Mansur, Ryan Phelps, Billy Abee, Kevin Laing, Rob Higbee, Ciaran Carr and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council.

Absent were: Jerry Long and Brad Klein

Guest(s): Robert Berman and Duane Haley

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Councilor Jacobs, seconded by Councilor Merritt and voted unanimously to approve the minutes from June 25, 2013.

Status of Property

Mr. Ciaran Carr, General Manager for Wintonbury Hills Golf Course gave a brief update of the course. The weather was fairly phenomenal over the past two months. The month of July 2013 was a great month and the course made budget. At the end of August 2013, the course was ahead in revenues and green fees from prior year.

- Rounds in 2012 were 4600 versus 4300 played thus far in 2013. The first quarter performance drove figures ahead in 2012 due to an earlier start in the season.
- It was also noted that Event rounds increased from 2544 of prior year to 2656 which includes the booking of approximately 2 more outings this year versus last year. The course has smaller events of 30 – 40 persons to play at a higher ticket. Usually, more money is made on the outing side and does not impact daily fee play as much as a larger outing would.
- The course has surpassed budget projections with increased driving range numbers, Food & Beverage and Pass Sales are both up \$20,000 over prior year respectively.
- Labor costs are flat; however there were increases in Insurance and Worker's Compensation of approximate \$10,000.

- Year to date operational expenses of \$34,000 lower due to the Billy Casper Golf renewal contract, electricity, gas/diesel, phone, cable, and trash agreements renegotiated.

Overall, Wintonbury Hills Golf Course is the only course that is doing great financially in the region ranging from Delaware to the North.

There was a lengthy discussion of the committee regarding the impact of outings on regular play with pass holders and tee times.

Mr. Bill Starkie expressed concerns regarding outings versus public play on the weekends. He stated that the conditions of the course are not as great with this type of play due to replacing divots, etc.

Mr. Cieran Carr commented by stating play is slow on weekends around 1:00 p.m. Management has been tasked with ensuring profitability and return back to the town to possibly build capital reserves.

Mr. Ryan Phelps stated that it can difficult to balance the tee sheet and accommodate the public, pass holders and outings. Memberships have decreased, however this scenario has given an opportunity to capture larger dollars with public play. He also further explained that a municipal golf course has a different model with other factors and has remained profitable than a private sector course.

Councilor Merritt strongly expressed that all persons who play the golf course should pay the same rate during “primetime”.

Mr. Jon Colman commented that this golf course is a tremendous public asset to the town and community as any other public town building or property.

Councilor Jacobs stated that the course does sell regular rack time rates and does not discount. It was noted that the only time Management would consider discounts is to gain loyalty or to fill a slot that is less utilized.

Maintenance/Course Updates

Mr. Mark Mansur, Superintendent updated the committee on the maintenance details of the course. The course is in excellent shape with greens. The maintenance team will begin culturally firming tee surfaces that drain well and implementing top dressing. Mr. Mansur continues to evaluate the progressive attrition with tree issues on the course.

The committee discussed possibly adding curbing to control traffic flow on where to protect play, tee boxes and greens. Councilor Jacobs suggested to rope off areas of concern that have been severely damaged.

Mr. Mansur and his team will begin the aeration process by late October.

Mr. Mansur also inquired about winter plowing for this upcoming season. He requested clarification of responsibilities for these duties.

Status of Food and Beverage Service

Mr. Carr also presented several e-mail blast promoting the Tap Inn restaurant themed dinner nights and events scheduled for October 2013. It was also reported that the utilization of the new signage for the restaurant has been a very positive mechanism in attracting more patrons. The Tap Inn will continue to promote and provide dinners and desserts for Thanksgiving and revamp the Meals to Go program as well.

Marketing

The course has been ranked #6 on Golf.com. Wintonbury is by far one of the best municipal courses in the United States.

In addition to several e-mail blasts promoting specials and restaurant offers, a direct mailer advertisement was also sent to all in the general database.

Councilor Berman commented on other ways the course could generate additional revenues.

Mr. Colman stated that initial plan when opening this course was to hire Billy Casper Golf management to manage the golf course and implement Councils role is to set policy.

Other Business

Mr. Carr reported that the collaboration of the SNAG golf program and Bloomfield Public Schools went very well over the summer months during camp season. However, the Board of Education is not able to support the program financially for a fall startup. Mr. Carr will continue to work with staff from the BOE once funding is available.

Management also addressed concerns with issues in the driving range. The cost and expense of losing range balls have increased. There is no way to keep out these balls out of the tees. The committee discussed a possible solution to buy a small tractor to assist with picking the driving range. This piece of equipment has been priced at approximately \$5,000 - \$6,000 and a new picker would be \$2,000.

Mr. Duane Haley commented regarding communication and signage to inform the golfer and consumers of the course on etiquette and rules of play. He stated that it is a crucial aspect of the game to learn proper etiquette of demands and responsibilities as a golfer.

Mr. Starkie also informed the committee about financial contributions and concerns regarding the Wounded Warrior Project. There has been national media speculation regarding whether or not the donation received from an individual is actually benefitting veterans directly.

Adjournment

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor Jacobs and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m.